

International Law Studies – Volume 40

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U.S. Naval War College (Editor)

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VIII. European Possessions in the Western Hemisphere (Continued)

Statement by the Secretary of State on German Reply to Note of the United States

(Dept. of State Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 54, July 6, 1940)

The Secretary of State, the Honorable Cordell Hull, made the following statement on July 5:

"The American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin has communicated to the Department the text of a note dated July 1, which he has received from the German Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"The note in question refers to the note delivered by the American Chargé d'Affaires under instructions of the Government of the United States on June 18, in which this Government informed the Government of the German Reich that it would not recognize any transfer of a geographical region of the Western Hemisphere from one non-American power to another non-American power, and that it would not acquiesce in any attempt to undertake such transfer.

"The German Minister of Foreign Affairs states that the Government of the German Reich is unable to perceive for what reason the Government of the United States of America has addressed this communication to the Reich Government. He states that in contrast with other countries, especially in contrast with England and France, Germany has no territorial possessions in the American Continent, and has given no occasion whatever for the assumption that it intends to acquire such possessions, and he asserts that thus insofar as Germany is concerned, the communication addressed to the Reich Government is without object.

"The German Minister of Foreign Affairs continues by remarking that in this case the interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine implicit in the communication of the Government

of the United States would amount to conferring upon some European countries the right to possess territories in the Western Hemisphere and not to other European countries. He states that it is obvious that such an interpretation would be untenable. He concludes by remarking that apart from this, the Reich Government would like to point out again on this occasion that the nonintervention in the affairs of the American Continent by European nations which is demanded by the Monroe Doctrine can in principle be legally valid only on condition that the American nations for their part do not interfere in the affairs of the European Continent.

"The foregoing is the substance of the German note.

"I feel that no useful purpose will be served at this time for this Government to undertake to make any further communication to the Government of the German Reich on the subject matter of the communication above quoted.

"The fundamental questions involved are entirely clear to all of the peoples of the American republics, and undoubtedly as well to the majority of the governments and peoples in the rest of the world.

"The Monroe Doctrine is solely a policy of self-defense, which is intended to preserve the independence and integrity of the Americas. It was, and is, designed to prevent aggression in this hemisphere on the part of any non-American power, and likewise to make impossible any further extension to this hemisphere of any non-American system of government imposed from without. It contains within it not the slightest vestige of any implication, much less assumption, of hegemony on the part of the United States. It never has resembled, and it does not today resemble, policies which appear to be arising in other geographical areas of the world, which are alleged to be similar to the Monroe Doctrine, but which, instead of resting on the sole policies of self-defense and of respect for existing sovereignties, as does the Monroe Doctrine, would in reality seem to be only the pretext for the carrying out of conquest by the sword, of military occupation, and of complete economic and political domination by certain powers of other free and independent peoples.

"The Monroe Doctrine has, of course, not the remotest connection with the fact that certain European nations exercise sovereignty over colonies in the Western Hemisphere and that certain other European nations do not. This situation existed before the Monroe Doctrine was proclaimed. The Doctrine did not undertake to interfere with the existing situation, but did announce that further incursions would not be tolerated. It made clear that the future transfer of existing possessions to another non-American state would be regarded as inimical to the interests of this hemisphere. This has become a basic policy of the Government of the United States. As already stated in the communication addressed to the German Government by this Government under date of June 18, the Government of the United States will neither recognize nor acquiesce in the transfer to a non-American power of geographical regions in this hemisphere now possessed by some other non-American power.

"The Government of the United States pursues a policy of nonparticipation and of noninvolvement in the purely political affairs of Europe. It will, however, continue to cooperate, as it has cooperated in the past, with all other nations, whenever the policies of such nations make it possible, and whenever it believes that such efforts are practicable and in its own best interests, for the purpose of promoting economic, commercial, and social rehabilitation, and of advancing the cause of international law and order, of which the entire world stands so tragically in need today."